

HEBREWS

1:1-3

Introduction

To be a Hebrew in first century Rome was bad enough; anti-Semitism among the Gentiles was extensive. To be a Hebrew in first century Rome who had embraced Jesus Christ as your Messiah made your situation extreme; you were cut-off from your Jewish family and friends.

In the mid-sixties of the first century many Hebrew Christians had all their worldly goods confiscated. They were not able to conduct business or maintain their trade. They were mocked, scourged, tormented, and imprisoned. They were made homeless and lived as pilgrims and strangers in caves and holes in the ground. (Charles Swindoll).

The Hebrew Christians were growing spiritually weary. They were contemplating a return to their Jewish traditions. A return to Judaism would at least bring them back into good standing with the larger Jewish community and alleviate a major portion of their suffering.

It is to these struggling saints that this letter was written. In it they are encouraged to abandon any thought of ever returning to Judaism. Instead they should patiently endure their struggle.

The first three verses of the letter gave them a perspective from which they could put endurance into practice. It can be summarized by two words – *spoken* and *seated*:

1. In verses one and two you learn that Jesus has spoken on earth.
2. In verse three you learn that Jesus is seated in heaven

These two words about Jesus would give the Hebrew Christians all the perspective they needed to endure as pilgrims and strangers. They will do the same for you and I in *any* and *all* of our struggles.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Listen To Jesus As He Has Spoken On Earth To Reveal God To You, and #2 Look To Jesus As He Is Seated In Heaven To Represent You To God.

#1 Listen To Jesus As He Has Spoken
On Earth To Reveal God To You
(v1-2a)

The Hebrew Christians were suffering physically... emotionally... and spiritually. It is only natural when under such stress to seek to escape from it. While *natural* to seek to escape, it may not be *supernatural*. God may want to strengthen you to patiently endure.

The Hebrew Christians thought they would escape their situation by returning to the Temple with its ceremonies and sacrifices. But if they listened to Jesus they would understand that He was sent to earth to *fulfill* and *finish* **all** the ceremonies and sacrifices. His coming was the conclusion of God's revelation of Himself through rites, rituals, rules, and regulations. A return to Judaism would be a retreat from discipleship.

The writer puts it this way as the letter opens:

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

God "spoke" in the past, but He has now "spoken to us by His Son" - who he identifies as Jesus in 2:9 and 4:14. Jesus is not just another way of God revealing Himself to human beings. The sentence is constructed to show that every previous way God has used to reveal Himself has its completion in Him. To return to them would be to go backward at a time that they needed to move forward.

Previously God spoke "at various times." It means *piecemeal* or *progressively*. For example: God sent the angel Gabriel to reveal His plan for the future of Israel and the world. As Daniel inquired further, he was told to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). The rest of the revelation, and its fulfillment, would come later to others.

Previously God spoke “in various ways.” If you look in the Old Testament you’ll find God using narrative... history... poetry... psalms... law... prophecy... allegory... metaphor... typology... figures... dreams... parables... symbols. You’ll find just about every kind of communication you can think of.

Previously God spoke these ways “to the fathers by the prophets.” The “fathers” are our ancestors – both Jews and Gentiles. While God’s revelation of Himself was to the Jews, it was to be through them to the whole world. The “prophets” would include all those who spoke forth the inspired Word of God.

What did they speak about? **Mostly about God’s Son coming into the world as its Savior and Redeemer!** Later in Hebrews we will read concerning Jesus,

Hebrews 10:7 ‘Behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me...’

The entire “volume” of God’s “book” to mankind is about Jesus in one way or another. From Genesis to Malachi the coming Savior is the theme.

There is an episode in the gospel of Luke that shows this. Jesus had been crucified. He had risen from the dead, but His disciples did not know He was alive. Two of them were returning from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus when Jesus drew near and began walking with them. They didn’t recognize Him. He pretended not to know that they were talking about His crucifixion and the empty tomb. They couldn’t put it all together: How could Jesus be the Messiah? Why did He die a criminals death on the Cross? Where was His body? Where was the promise of the kingdom of heaven on earth?

Finally Jesus said to them,

Luke 24:25 KJV “...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:
Luke 24:26 KJV Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?
Luke 24:27 KJV And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

“Moses and all the prophets” is a summary for the entire Old Testament. The volume of the book, the law and the prophets, the

poetry and the psalms... Given to us by about forty human authors over some fifteen hundred years... Was to prepare mankind for the coming of God's Son. Just as children might be taught letters, then words, then sentences – God taught mankind about their coming Savior in piecemeal, progressive fashion. **Then He came:**

Hebrews 1:2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*...

The “last days” means *at the end of these days of progressive revelation*. It is also a distinctly Jewish phrase. The “last days” were the days in which the Messiah would come. The writer, then, is saying, “In these promised Last Days Messiah **has come** and **has spoken**; He Himself is the final revelation of God.”

These Hebrew Christians were seeking to escape their suffering by returning to Judaism. ***There was nothing to return to!*** Everything in their Judaism was only to prepare them for Jesus – *and He had already come*. To return would be to *regress* into *religion* rather than make *progress* in their *relationship*. The writer would thus encourage them to **endure**.

You will be in many situations that require endurance. You'll want to escape; **don't!** This book encourages disciples to press on, to move forward, to make progress in your walk. Let its words dwell in your hearing and in your hearts.

#2 Look To Jesus As He Is Seated
In Heaven To Represent You To God
(v2b-3)

The fact that Jesus is “seated” would mean a lot more to you if you were Hebrew. Their representative before God on earth was the High Priest. In his ministering for the people before God in the Temple, **the High Priest never, ever, sat down**. He was always standing to indicate that his work was never, ever finished.

For Jesus to be in heaven seated meant to the Jew that His work was done, finished, completed. There were no more sacrifices to offer, no more forgiveness of sins necessary that He hadn't already provided.

He could now perfectly represent them before His Father. God the Father would *hear* and *heed* all of His Son's requests on their behalf. Let me just say ahead of time that this truth is what gives you the strength to patiently endure. You can be absolutely certain that the things happening in your life are being brought by Jesus to the Father on your behalf and are for your good to bring God glory.

The bulk of the Book of Hebrews is a discussion about how Jesus is "better" than everything else the Hebrews had trusted in to strengthen them. The word "better" is used some thirteen times. We'll see that Jesus is better than angels; better than Moses; better than Joshua. The longest section deals with Him being a better priest. Some have outlined the book this way: Jesus Is Better In His Person (1:1-4:13), Better In His Priesthood (4:14-10:18), and Better In The Principle Of Life He Offers, Faith (10:19-13:25).

The writer gives his readers a head's up on why Jesus is "better" by describing Him in verses two and three. These verses are like a *Cliff's Notes* on Hebrews. If you look to Jesus as He is described in them you already know He's better than *anything* or *anyone* else.

He is better because He is heir of all things:

Hebrews 1:2 ...whom He has appointed heir of all things...

This is a prophetic statement. Jesus will one day inherit all things. He is seated in heaven. In the Book of the Revelation, He stands, comes forward, and takes a scroll from His Father's hands. It is the title deed to the earth. As He opens the seven-sealed scroll He takes back once-for-all the earth and everything in it. History is moving inevitably toward this final inheritance.

It strengthens you to endure when you realize that you are a joint-heir with Jesus! In Romans 8:17 you read,

Romans 8:17 [believers are] heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

"Suffer with Him" means you endure suffering as a disciple now; but you will be glorified when He claims His inheritance.

He is better because He *was* and *is* creator of all things:

Hebrews 1:2 ...through whom also He made the worlds;

The New Testament goes to great lengths to say that Jesus eternally existed as God and created all things.¹ This particular statement actually goes further than mere creation. The word for “worlds” means both *space* and *time*. In other words, Jesus created the physical universe with everything in it, **and** He created the *times* and *ages* through which it is passing! History is following a course long before determined by your Lord.

If history is following such a course, you can be assured that your life is also. You will be strengthened to endure when you realize that Jesus knows and manages the times and seasons of your life.

He is better because He is the revealer of God to mankind:

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of *His* glory...

This literally means that Jesus radiates the glory of God for us to see. Commentators compare this to the sun in our universe. The light from the sun allows us to know it exists; at the same time the sun cannot exist without radiating its light. In such a way, Jesus and the Father eternally co-exist, and we “see” the glory of the Father by looking at the Son.

Standing one day before the Temple, Jesus said, “**I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life**” (John 8:12). Jesus can transmit that light into your life and my life, so that we, in turn, can radiate the glory of God. We are often called upon to radiate His glory in a surrounding darkness. There is the darkness of injustice, of failure, privation, separation, disease, death, and of much else. There is the moral darkness of men blinded by their godless appetites and passions. Into this dark world God sent His glorious Light. We let it shine when we endure.

He is better because He is the express image of God:

¹ John 1:1; Colossians 1:16

Hebrews 1:3 ... and the express image of His person...

This translates the Greek term used for the impression made by a die or stamp on a seal, or the engraving on a coin. The design on the die is reproduced on the wax or metal. Jesus Christ is the reproduction of God. He is the perfect, personal imprint of God in time and space.

Jesus told his disciples, “**he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.**” (John 14:9). When you see Jesus dealing with people in the Gospels, you are seeing how God deals with you. He is compassionate, gracious, merciful, and slow to anger. He is forgiving. He is faithful. See Him stooping to wash the disciple’s feet in John thirteen and you will be strengthened to endure.

He is better because He is sustaining the entire universe:

Hebrews 1:3 ...and upholding all things by the word of His power...

The Greek word for “upholding” means *to support, to maintain*, and it is used here in the present tense, implying continuous action. Everything in the universe is sustained right now by Jesus Christ.

If Jesus can hold the physical universe together, do you think He can hold your personal universe together? When life falls apart, He is still holding it together.

He is better because He can save you from sin:

Hebrews 1:3 ... when He had by Himself purged our sins...

The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Jesus Christ went to the cross, died our deserved death for us, and thereby took the penalty for our sin on Himself. If we will accept His death and believe that He died for us He will free us from the penalty of sin. But more than this: He frees us from the power of sin. More still: He will one day free us from the very presence of sin! I am thus encouraged to endure and to lay aside any sinful encumbrances that might halt my spiritual progress.

This is Jesus, Who “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” There He represents you before the Father. You can be

absolutely certain that the things happening in your life are being brought by Jesus to the Father on your behalf and are for your good to bring God glory.

Conclusion

Here is another way of looking at these verses. They present Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King:

1. As Prophet, He is the final spokesman for God.
2. As Priest, He has made atonement by His once-for-all sacrifice and is interceding on your behalf.
3. As King, He is sustaining and controlling the universe and everything in it – including its times and seasons.

These three offices – Prophet, Priest, and King – encompass everything you need in a Person in order to be strengthened to endure.

Suffering and the stress it brings presses upon you to find a way of **escape**. Listen to and look to Jesus and you will **endure**.